

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Setting and context

The management of Forestry Commission Scotland's National Forest Estate is guided by the National Strategic Directions (2013), which identifies six aspirations that will influence integrated land management within our boundaries:

- **Healthy** – achieving good environmental and silvicultural condition in a changing climate.
- **Productive** – providing sustainable economic benefits from the land.
- **Treasured** – as a multi-purpose resource that sustains livelihoods, improves quality of life, and offers involvement and enjoyment.
- **Accessible** – local woodlands and national treasures that are well promoted, welcoming and open for all.
- **Cared For** – working with nature and respecting landscapes, natural and cultural heritage.
- **Good Value** – exemplary, effective and efficient delivery of public benefits.

Drawing on these key aspirations North Highland Forest District (NHFD) have drafted a three year Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017). The plan establishes links with the national priorities underpinning these aspirations, detailing local priorities upon which NHFD plans will be founded. The NHFD Strategic Plan ensures that land management activities compliment and enhance the local economic, social and ecological individuality of each LMP area. This plan aims to provide local context to the national aspirations and key priorities by detailing local priorities that will support us in achieving sustainable integrated land management across all areas of the National Forest Estate.

Appendix 1 – The Forest Planning Framework in Scotland gives context to the purpose and scope of this Land Management Plan. In compliance with UKFS this is a strategic indicative plan intended to state the objectives of management and how sustainable forest management will be achieved by signposting the relevant guidance and best practice and spatially identifying management aspirations.

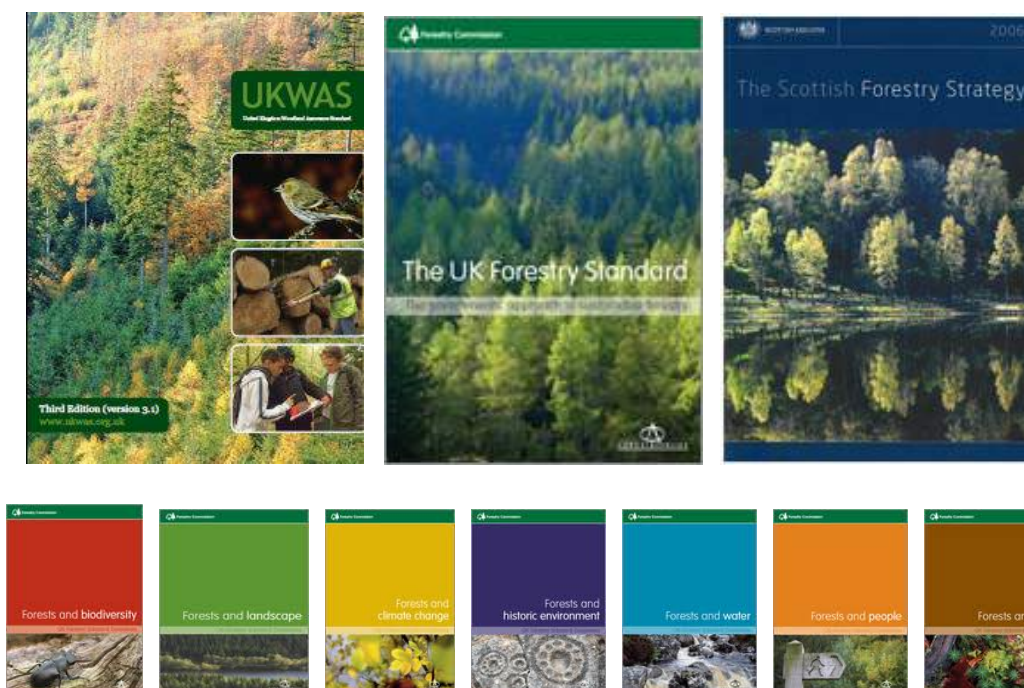
This plan also provides a means to communicate our proposals to the neighbouring communities and stakeholders and serves as an agreed statement of intent against which implementation can be checked and monitored (see **Section 4.4 – FDP Brief** for details of the monitoring proposed).

Appendix 1 indicates the levels of operational plans that sit below, and are informed by this LMP. In compliance with UKFS the operational plans detail specific implementation detail including:

- Potential hazards to workers and forest users
- Operational detail specific to machine use
- Safeguards and mitigation measures to protect the immediate site and, by association, the wider forest
- Detail of post operations planning including the treatment of any waste materials identified.
- Contingency planning

Stakeholders requiring this level of information should contact the North Highland Forest District Operations Team following approval of this plan.

Appendix 2 – Key Policies and Guidance details the external policy drivers for the proposals in this plan. Current industry and FC guidance will be complied with during any operations associated with this plan, including any subsequent guidance revisions published during the plan's ten year approval period.



1.2 History of Plan

The production of East Sutherland Land Management Plan is the full ten year revision of

- Dornoch Forest Design Plan 030/516/283 (expired 24.03.2014)

and it seeks approval for operations to be carried out in two forest block, covered by FDPs valid until 2016:

- Achormlarie Forest Design Plan 030/516/308 (expires 30.03.2016)
- Rogart Forest Design Plan 030/516/223 (expires 09.10.2016)

Previously the plans had each covered their individual areas however to better address issues of landscape design, water catchment management and biodiversity conservation NHFD have merged the plan areas and the number adopted for the full area is: **030/516/403**. The term ‘Land Management Plan’ better reflects the wider scope of the document in dealing not only with forestry, but with designated site planning, open ground management, scheduled ancient monument planning and general integrated land management issues. The document’s key function remains to seek approval for felling and restocking over the next ten years.

The plan area is situated to the north and west of Dornoch and to the east of Bonar Bridge (see Map 1 Location & Context). The area is bounded to the north by Strath Fleet and Loch Fleet and to the south by the Dornoch Firth.

Included are the woodlands of Dornoch area (Skelbo, Balvraid, Camore, Harriets, Fourpenny and Duchess Countess), Achormlarie and Rogart.

The Land Management Plan area covers c. 3075 Ha. Skelbo and Balvraid woodlands were in 1955 leased from Cambusmore Estate for 200 years. The lease area is 134 Ha, the remaining area is owned by Forestry Commission Scotland.

72% of the area is productive forest, 2.5% is currently felled in fallow, 21% is open space, just over 3% is under agricultural tenancy, 0.2% open water, 0.1% recreational facilities (visitor car parks) and land under other management or unplantable is about 1%.

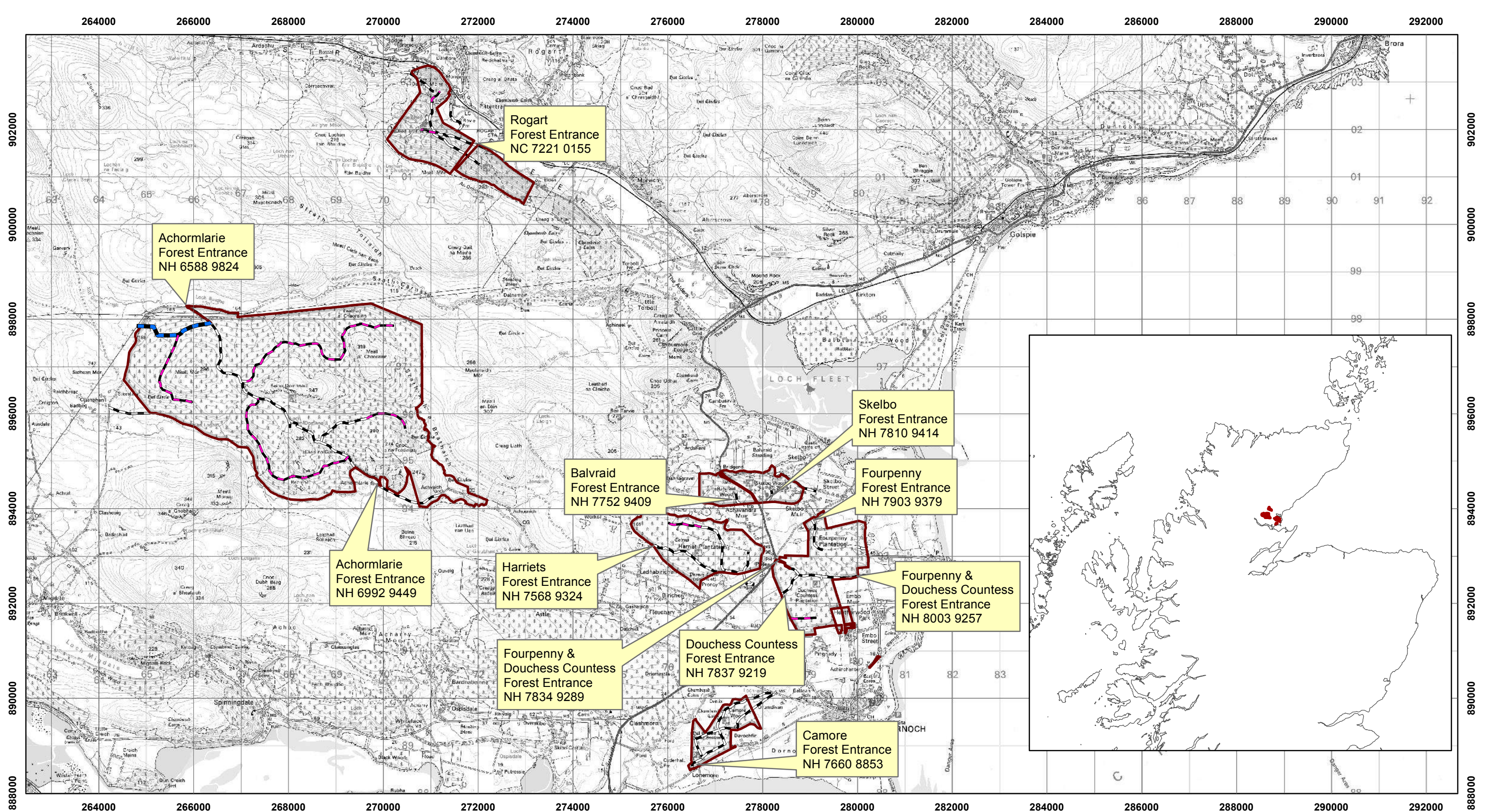
Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis* – SS) is the most predominant conifer in the productive high forest at 43% of the stocked area, concentrated mainly in Achormlarie block, but is also present in Dornoch blocks and Rogart. Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris* – SP) is the second largest component (29% of the stocked area), present in all forest block covered by the plan, but with significant pure crop areas in Dornoch blocks.

Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* – LP) is the third main species (19% of the stocked area), forming an important element of the crop on wetter and poorer soils, both in pure blocks and in mixture with sitka spruce and less often with scots pine. Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi* – JL), Hybrid larch (*Larix x eurolepis* – HL), European larch (*Larix decidua* – EL), Norway spruce (*Picea abies* – NS), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* – DF) are planted in varied mixtures across the LMP area, and together they cover about 5% of the stocked area.

Broadleaf species are an underrepresented component of the forest, covering above 3% of the stocked areas, with the main species being Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Sycamore (*Acer platanoides*), Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix* species). They are mostly confined to riparian areas and poor/wet soils.



Heavily browsed downy birch in Harriets plantation Photo A. Baranska NHFD



Scotland's National
Forest Estate is
responsibly
managed to the
UK Woodland
Assurance Standard.



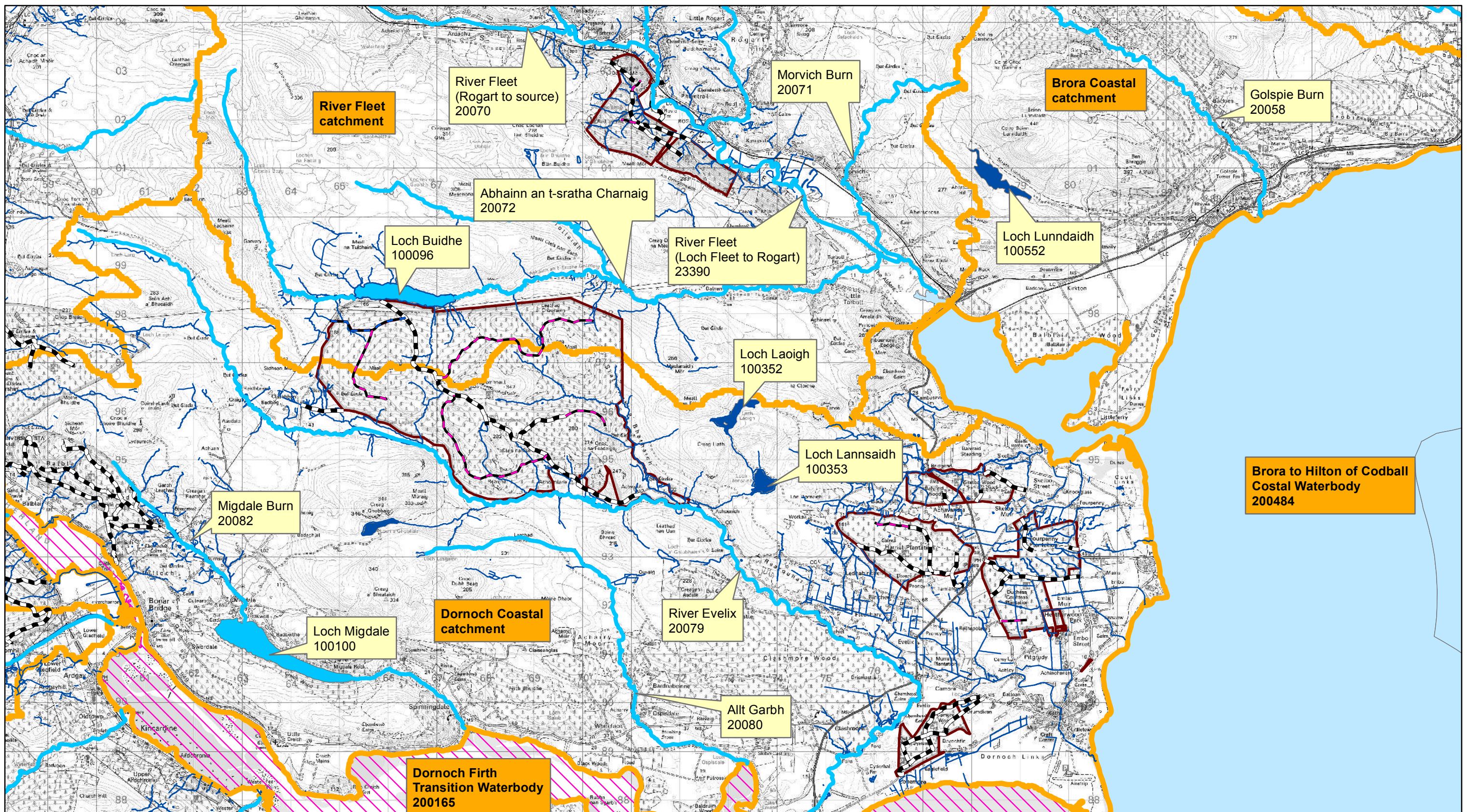
Legend

- Land Management Plan Area
- Forest Road
- Proposed roadline
- Proposed substation road

Scale @ A3 1:75,000



Map 1 - Location & Context

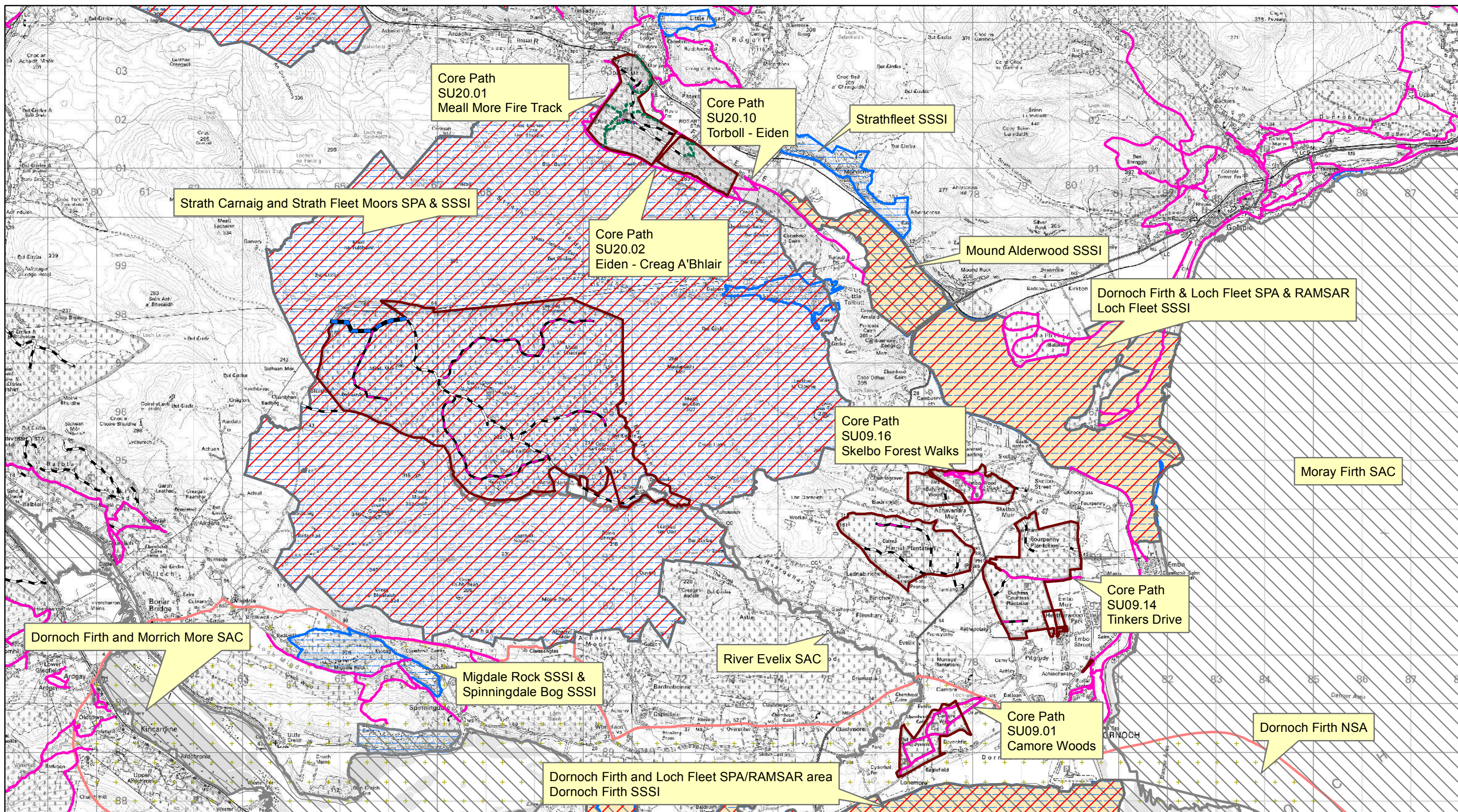


Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Land Management Plan Area | Major Catchments |
| Forest Roads | Coastal Waterbodies |
| Proposed roadline | Loch Waterbodies |
| Proposed substation road | Small Loch Waterbodies |
| River Waterbodies | Transition Waterbodies |
| Minor Watercourses | |

Scale @ A3 1:75,000





Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Land Management Plan Area | SPA |
| Rogart Community Paths | SAC |
| Forest road | SSSI |
| Proposed roadline | RAMSAR |
| Proposed substation road | NSA |
| Core Path Network | Districts |

Scale @ A3 1:75,000

